

## **All-America City Awards announced**

Anaheim, CA—Ten communities earned the All-America City award title, the oldest and most prestigious civic recognition competition in the United States. Communities from all over the country participated in the two-day event, which was held at the Anaheim Marriott in Orange County, California.

The winning communities are (listed alphabetically by state, not ranked):

Flowing Wells, Arizona (neighborhood)  
Santa Rosa, California  
Sierra Madre, California  
Hollywood, Florida  
Polk County, Florida  
Dubuque, Iowa  
Lewiston, Maine  
Barnstable, Massachusetts  
Clinton, North Carolina  
Hickory, North Carolina

“These All-America cities symbolize the spirit of grassroots democracy and community problem solving,” said Gloria Rubio-Cortés, president and CEO of the Denver-based nonprofit organization that awards communities for outstanding civic accomplishments. “Their award-winning efforts addressed some of the most difficult challenges facing communities today.

The 2007 winners tackled tough community issues such as healthcare, environmental protection, demographic change, economic development, promotion of the arts, innovations in parks and recreation programs, cultural diversity, education, neighborhood revitalization, youth involvement in local decision-making and public safety.

After an extensive application/screening process, each finalist community sent a delegation of civic activists to present three examples of collaborative community problem solving. A “jury” of experts on local government and community affairs selected the ten winners based on their stories of positive community change. The winners were selected in part for their ability to engage a broad cross section of the community, including youth, business leaders, elected officials, city staff and nonprofit groups in civic dialogues leading to tangible results.

The 2007 All-America finalists included:

- Calabasas, California
- Kissimmee/Osceola County, Florida
- Covington, Georgia
- La Porte, Indiana
- Fort Wayne - Allen County, Indiana

- Lawrence, Kansas
- Shawnee, Kansas
- Independence, Oregon
- Laredo, Texas
- Radford, Virginia

Now in its 58th year, the award is an honor achieved by more than 500 neighborhoods, villages, towns, cities, counties, and regions across the country. Some have won the award multiple times.

This year's AAC awards are sponsored in part by MWH, Jones Day, Southwest Airlines (The Official Airlines of the All-America City Awards), ABC7/KABC-TV, Marriott International and the Anaheim Marriott. AAC winners are nationally recognized and realize significant economic impacts and increased civic engagement.

Headquartered in Denver, Colorado, the National Civic League (NCL) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that accomplishes its mission of strengthening democracy at the local level through training, technical assistance, publishing, facilitating community-wide strategic planning and awards programs.

NCL publishes research on government structures and reform and community building innovation (The National Civic Review, The Civic Index, and The 8th Edition of the Model City Charter). In addition to the All-America City Awards, NCL conducts the MetLife Foundation Ambassadors in Education Awards--announced April 10, 2007. For more information, visit [www.ncl.org](http://www.ncl.org).

A fact sheet on the awards program and summaries of the community projects of the finalists and All-America Cities follow:

# **All-America City Award**

## *Fact Sheet*

### **BACKGROUND**

The All-America City Award is the oldest and most respected community recognition program in the nation. This year marks the 58<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the award that recognizes communities whose citizens work together to identify and tackle community-wide challenges and achieve uncommon results.

Each year, only ten cities are selected as All-America Cities. These communities exemplify the true American spirit at work. Their citizens are actively committed to ensuring that their community is a safe nurturing place to live. Since the program's inception, more than 4,000 communities (neighborhoods/cities/towns/counties/regions) have competed and nearly 500 have been named "All-America Cities."

### **APPLICATIONS**

Each year, the All-America City Award program receives applications from communities across the country. A Screening Committee of public and civic affairs experts reviews the applications and, following a careful and thorough examination, the Finalists are announced.

At hearings before the All-America City jury in June, each Finalist community will present its application and answer questions posed by the jury. Once the jury has carefully considered all Finalists' presentations and applications, the ten All-America Cities will be announced at a special awards ceremony.

### **CRITERIA**

For a community to be named an All-America City, it must be able to demonstrate successful resolution of community issues through collaborative effort. Award winning criteria include the following: active citizen involvement, effective and efficient government performance, maximized local philanthropic and volunteer resources, a strong capacity for cooperation and consensus building, community vision and pride, inter-group relations, community information sharing, and intercommunity cooperation.

### **NATIONAL CIVIC LEAGUE**

The All-America City Award is a program of the National Civic League, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization founded in 1894 to strengthen citizen democracy by transforming democratic institutions. NCL accomplishes its mission through technical assistance, training, publishing, research, and the All-America City Award, the nation's oldest and most prestigious community recognition program. The National Civic League is headquartered in Denver, Colorado.

## **All-America City Project Summaries**

## *Flowing Wells, Arizona*

### **Flowing Wells District Park**

The recently completed Flowing Wells District Park includes a t-ball field, the largest 4-plex basketball court in the county, a volleyball sand court, 2 tot lots, horseshoe pits, 2 ball fields complete with lighting and bleachers, restrooms, picnic tables complete with ramadas and grills. Used daily by a nearby charter school, the park has also the home field of the Northwest Fast Pitch Team. There is a perimeter-walking path and the park feeds into the Rillito River Park that is a divided urban pathway along the bank of the wash.

### **Ellie Towne/Flowing Wells Community Center**

The Ellie Towne/Flowing Wells Community Center will celebrate its grand opening in September of this year. This facility will be the largest community center constructed by the county to date. The 20,000 square foot facility has a campus style layout with four buildings and a central courtyard. The buildings are zoned to house a large dividable multipurpose room, a pair of youth activity rooms, a senior center, and a multi-use small child, art, dance and computer rooms. The central courtyard area will be covered with a unique fabric canopy that will provide shade but allow for air movement within the cool space. The public art portrays a flowing glass stream on the floor of the courtyard. This complex will also house the Flowing Wells Health Center.

### **Flowing Wells Health Center**

The Flowing Wells Health Center was opened in December 2005, the result of a strong partnership of two diverse faith-based groups, the school district and the community. The elementary schools in the immediate area serve a population in which 95-98% qualify for free or reduced lunch. The FW School District wanted to assist these children but was unable to find a location that was available at any of their existing campuses. The Victory Assembly of God Church had temporary space. St. Elizabeth of Hungary is a local health clinic operated by Catholic Social Services. All came together for the benefit of the community to meet the health needs of the uninsured such as immunization of children and treating the effects of lead poisoning from the contaminated soil.

## *Santa Rosa, California*

### **Santa Rosa Downtown Arts Program**

The Santa Rosa Downtown Arts Program brings a wide range of arts and cultural programming into the downtown area to strengthen the community's image and sense of place, increase cultural unity and stimulate economic development. The program creates an arts hub that draws people downtown to live, work and play, which encourages

development and increases downtown business. The Downtown Arts Program has a three-prong approach:

- Physical Environment: Artists design sculptures, informational kiosks, benches, light poles and news racks. Art facilities, studios, galleries, and exhibition spaces are a priority.
- Cultural Programming includes diverse music, dance, theater, film, and literary arts.
- Sustainable Resources: Leadership and funding from public and private sector guarantee the program's strength and growth.

### **Measure O Public Safety Quarter-Cent Sales Tax Measure**

A quarter-cent public safety sales tax measure was placed on the November 2004 ballot, which came to be known as Measure O. The measure generates approximately \$7 million per year for Police, Fire, and Gang Prevention and Intervention efforts. The ordinance set up a citizen oversight committee and has strict rules preventing any "supplanting" of existing services or funding in the General Fund. This project has allowed significant progress to be made in vital areas at a time when core public safety was threatened.

### **Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force**

Four years ago, the city aggressively moved into action to address a growing gang problem. The city began with public outreach and education on the growing issue. Staff and policy leaders traveled to other cities to learn from their programs. The Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force was established to confront the issues and the risk to youth. The Task Force consists of a Policy Team and an Operational Team. The Policy Team is made up of 40 policy leaders from throughout Sonoma County whose agencies work with youth or law enforcement. The Operational Team members work directly with youth. They include 30 vice principals, police sergeants and directors of non-profits offering prevention and intervention services. These programs and services are primarily funded by a quarter-cent sales tax measure that dedicates 20% to gang prevention and intervention measures.

### ***Sierra Madre, California***

### **Senior Master Plan**

In 1999-2000, the City of Sierra Madre completed the first Senior Master Plan, with unparalleled input from civic leaders, city and local government members, and most importantly, the seniors of Sierra Madre. Five major areas of need for seniors were identified at that time, and plans were put in place to address those needs. These five major areas included: Housing; Transportation; Health & Safety; Recreation; and Resources. In 2006, the community thought it valuable to re-visit those senior needs and craft an updated Senior Master Plan based upon prior accomplishments and new challenges.

## **Parks Master Plan**

The adoption of the Parks Master Plan was the culmination of a long history of Sierra Madre's dedication to protect and preserve open space throughout the city. By formalizing these ideals in a master plan, the city has been mandated by its residents to actively pursue these three recommendations:

- Any new building in the parks should not infringe upon the open space that currently exists.
- The city should explore alternatives for joint-use agreements with area schools to fulfill the need for additional active youth space.
- Any vacant parcels of land that become available should be explored for purchase through alternative funding sources.

## **Youth Activity Center**

During the 1998 Youth Master Plan process, the Steering Committee stated that a Youth Activity Center was among the greatest needs identified for 12-18 year old youths in the City. At that time, the city created a temporary Youth Activity Center (YAC) for teenagers to have a place to talk to other young adults about issues affecting their lives, while also providing counseling services, classes and social activities. The previous YAC was an old church in the middle of a residential neighborhood. This facility was only considered a temporary solution, so after extensive study by the community, the city council approved moving the YAC to the Community Recreation Center as a second-story addition in order to preserve open space in the park.

## ***Hollywood, Florida***

### **Hollywood Housing and Neighborhood Development Strategy (Hollywood HANDS)**

In 2000, the City of Hollywood created the Department of Housing and Community Redevelopment specifically to evaluate the importance and visibility of neighborhood and housing issues in the City. Through the involvement of neighborhood associations, non-profit agencies, local businesses and local government, tremendous improvements have been made in the quality of life and appearance of Hollywood's most distressed neighborhoods. Under the over-arching mantle of the *Hollywood HANDS* philosophy, new affordable housing was developed, individual homes were improved, streetscapes were enhanced, new homebuyers were assisted, crime rates fell, and neighborhoods coalesced around the core values of empowerment, responsibility, accountability, authority and focus.

### **Hollywood Partnerships Represented In Diverse Environments (Hollywood PRIDE)**

Hollywood Partnerships Represented In Diverse Environments (Hollywood PRIDE) is designed to bring together all of Hollywood's diverse cultural segments to work for a better Hollywood by sharing their varied skills, attitudes, languages, and behaviors. All

can benefit from being immersed in new cultures. In order to accomplish this goal in the most effective possible manner the city has created one of the most extensive volunteer programs in the country known as *Volunteer Hollywood*. Cultural diversity and the opportunity to work together through volunteerism is a natural match. The alignment can only happen, however, when the forum is created to allow the community to work jointly to solve common concerns. Hollywood has provided that forum.

### **Born to Read Program**

The Born to Read Program breaks the cycle of illiteracy and the lack of home-based educational support from the pre-natal stages through youth in low-income families. By encouraging parents to read to their children from the very earliest time of their lives, the level of literacy so often lacking in low-income households is raised and the human capital of young people is enhanced and enabled to pursue all the creativity and skills a child may possess. The goal is accomplished through the innovative approach of positioning a full-time librarian at the Memorial Primary Care Clinic who interacts with each family with young children. Each family is given a library application, a resource guide and the child's first book. New parents are instructed how to improve their child's intellectual abilities through reading. The instruction is reinforced with every health care visit the family makes to the clinic.

### ***Polk County, Florida***

### **Prosperity Through Partnerships**

The Prosperity Through Partnerships campaign was launched to bring civic organizations, government agencies and businesses together to share resources, market assets, networking and develop strategies to revitalize the economy. Two new key initiatives employed to spark recovery through this project are the Polk County Bonus Incentive Program which rewards quality job generation and the award-winning Hurricane Heroes campaign which thanks and markets Polk County to the thousands of out of county electric company line workers, insurance adjustors and FEMA staff who assisted with the 2004 hurricane recovery.

### **Park Partners**

Park Partners, created in 2003 as a pilot program to enlist neighborhood volunteers, focuses on park rejuvenation in low-income high-crime areas prone to vandalism. The program asks community members to assume ownership of a park by signing an adoption pledge to care for and maintain park facilities. A parks staff volunteer from Polk County Leisure Services oversees the program and meets monthly on-site to work with community participants to layout and maintain the landscaping. Park Partners has developed a system by which plants can be propagated, planted and maintained solely through neighborhood and community volunteers.

### **Youth Leadership Team (YLT)**

Collaborating with school personnel and community leaders, YLT's mission is to educate teens and encourage them to set healthy goals and make appropriate and responsible choices. As a division of the Healthy Start Coalition's Teen Pregnancy Prevention Alliance (TPPA), team members are also asked to advise the Alliance on many aspects of their work and to give a voice to the unique perspective and opinions of teens throughout Polk County. The YLT is comprised of an ethnically diverse group of local students, ranging in ages from 10 to 19 years, representing 19 public and private schools, and home schooled students.

## **Dubuque, Iowa**

### **America's River Project**

The America's River project created a world-class venue to experience the Mississippi River. Designated as a National Interpretive Center for the Upper Mississippi River U.S. Wildlife and Fish Refuge and the recipient of a Smithsonian affiliation, the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium (NMRMA) showcases the beauty of the river while teaching the world about the river's importance to the environment and commerce, and provided a much needed boost to Dubuque's struggling economy, tourism, and image. Visitors are able to walk on the riverwalk, interact with the river through hands-on displays and aquariums, experience how the river boosts the economy, and explore the genius of the river – its backwaters – in wetland environment. People learn about the river in a classroom setting at the Grand River Center, a conference center built to enhance the educational efforts of the NMRMA. The 200-room Grand Harbor Resort is Iowa's first indoor water park. The resort offers stunning views of Dubuque and the Mississippi River.

### **Downtown Master Plan**

The Downtown Master Plan resulted from two "Housing Summits". The summits were community-wide discussions bringing together a variety of stakeholder groups with concerns about the condition of downtown housing. Participants quickly realized that addressing housing issues in the downtown required a larger view - looking at associated challenges like transportation and open spaces, delivery of city services, employment opportunities and entertainment. The Downtown Master Plan was crafted through a four-year process that included over 2,000 individuals involved in community meetings, a citizen questionnaire, reactor group session, and validation survey. In 2004, the City Council approved the Downtown Dubuque Master Plan that was born from this process. The plan has six elements of downtown revitalization that incorporates a "live, work and play" spirit, each representing a major focus of activity.

### **Crescent Community Health Center**

The Crescent Community Health Center is a freestanding health clinic that provides medical, optical and dental care for the community's underinsured and uninsured

citizens, individuals on Medicare and Medicaid including 40% of the community's children under the age of six. The CCHC employs an executive director, a full-time physician, a nurse practitioner, a registered nurse, two dentists, three hygienists, three dental assistants and support staff. The 7300 square foot facility is housed in a low-income neighborhood. The actual building site was an abandoned warehouse that has been restored to its original beauty. The first floor houses the CCHC, while the upper three floors are renovated creating 36 affordable apartments. The CCHC values include accessibility, collaboration, diversity and dignity, quality, advocacy, service and support.

## ***Lewiston, Maine***

### **Take the Money; You've Earned It**

Since 2004, Lewiston has stepped outside the traditional municipal government role by leading a volunteer-based coalition targeted at enhancing eligible residents' quality of life by advocating the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). As a result:

- 2004 – 2006: \$2,274,089 refunded to area residents;
- Thus far for 2007 tax season: \$1,489,624 has been claimed in refunds

Three Lewiston city councilors visited Boston in 2003 to learn about its successful EITC campaign and returned with news of a “step towards prosperity” for LMI workers. EITC provides increased financial stability by reducing the tax burden, supplementing wages, and assisting in the welfare-to-work transition. Lewiston's leadership was recognized through a United States Conference of Mayors “Outstanding Achievement” City Livability Award in 2006. Coalition members establish FREE tax preparation sites, provide training/IRS certification for volunteer preparers, e-file returns, and provide asset-building opportunities and follow-up.

### **Lots to Gardens**

Lots to Gardens is a youth/community-driven organization using sustainable urban gardens to improve access to fresh food for at-risk populations. Unlike most anti-hunger solutions, Lots to Gardens believes immediate needs must be coupled with long-term solutions to effectively break the cycles of poverty and hunger. Fifteen community gardens located primarily within the Lewiston's most impoverished areas assist in improving health, developing useful skills, fostering self-reliance, and building towards positive community-wide change. Lots to Gardens provides youth and adults with hands-on experience in food systems and anti-hunger work by building urban gardens and raising awareness of healthy eating and the value of eating locally grown produce. Over 200 residents ages 3-80, nearly all who are low-income, regularly participate. Adult and senior gardeners are diverse, with 55% being Somali and 90% women, and more than half of those in children/youth programs are refugees.

### **Lewiston Youth Advisory Council (LYAC)**

The Lewiston Youth Advisory Council (LYAC), enacted by the City Council, consists of 12 high school and 1 college student. LYAC engages youth to improve the community

and enhance their own lives. Members experience municipal government/civic engagement by initiating community projects—partnering with state/local officials, city of Lewiston staff, and peers. Following LYAC’s leadership of Lewiston’s 2006 All-America City quest, in the fall of 2006, LYAC began developing its own “youth-to-youth” initiative regarding the consequences/health-related dangers of underage drinking. Entitled U BOOZE U LOOZE, Maine’s Attorney General lauded it “*the first of its kind in Maine.*” Seven months later, LYAC applauded the US Surgeon General’s March 6, 2007, “*Call to Action*” to prevent/reduce underage drinking and spoke at the state capitol to further advocate UBUL. A 2006 National Harris Woffard Award “*Top 6 Finalist*” for service learning/civic engagement, the Maine Department of Education Citizenship Education Task Force touts LYAC as an effective youth engagement model.

## ***Barnstable, Massachusetts***

### **Economic Development Stimulus Plan**

There was community consensus that Barnstable’s growth had to be directed in a more thoughtful manner. The town along with non-profits, the business community, and the citizens as a whole collaborated to develop a vision for Barnstable’s future, which encouraged and concentrated development in downtown Hyannis where the infrastructure exists to accommodate denser growth on smaller environmental footprints. Consistent with smart growth principles, the resulting Economic Development Stimulus Plan encourages mixed-use development and walkable neighborhoods, creates new streetscape improvements and arts and culture activities, and restructures government regulations. These broad goals have been translated into a variety of land use and economic development strategies that have focused growth where it is environmentally and socially appropriate and has led to the renaissance of downtown Hyannis.

### **Affordable Housing Plan**

The objective of the plan is to ensure that at least 10% of the town’s year-round housing stock is affordable to those residents earning 80% or less of the area median income. The plan outlined the methods by which the town would strive to increase its inventory of affordable housing units, with the ambitious goal of producing 1,000 units of housing over a ten-year period. In crafting the Plan, the town’s housing committee, which includes members of the business, housing and human services communities, proposed innovative strategies to meet this goal including the dedication of town-owned land, the conversion of existing market rate units, and changes in land use regulations.

### **Barnstable Youth Commission**

The Barnstable Youth Commission is composed of five voting members, who must be residents of the town aged between 13 and 19, and two non-voting adult members. The Youth Commission serves as an advisory committee to the Barnstable Town Council, putting forward ideas and making recommendations for programs and legislation that will benefit the town’s youth and their families. The Youth Commission is based on the Five

Promises of the ‘America’s Promise’ program. Barnstable County was recently selected for the second consecutive year as one of America’s Promise “100 Best Communities for Young People.” The Youth Services Division assisted with the award submission.

## *Clinton, North Carolina*

### **March to a Million**

The goal of *March to a Million* was to rally the entire community to raise \$1,400,000 in four months to:

- Ensure adequate up-to-date **teaching space** for an expanding student population.
- Ensure inclusion of a **650-seat auditorium** for cultural art opportunities for students and the entire community.
- Ensure inclusion of an auxiliary gym to relieve space constraints.
- Instill a feeling of ownership for the new Clinton High School (CHS).

*March to a Million* skyrocketed past its goal of \$1,400,000 because of a dedicated, totally-involved community, led by a 36-member committee which involved the entire community, including businesses, school employees and students, civic organizations, churches, individuals, alumni, booster clubs and government agencies to accomplish its goal.

### **Fitness Renaissance**

An innovative, school-based program called *Fitness Renaissance* fights against obesity and lack of physical exercise. K-5 physical education teachers assess and assign individual student’s fitness goals in five different exercises: the V-sit reach, the quarter-mile run, the flex-arm hang, push-ups, and the shuttle run. Based on overall performance to goals, children are presented gold, silver, or bronze awards at school-wide assemblies. The *Center for Health and Wellness* is a 28,000 sq. ft. exercise and aquatic center with a membership representative of a broad spectrum of individuals and businesses. The *Center* offers a free-form exercise and structured programs seven days a week that include fitness classes, exercise sessions, and aquatic sessions

### **Community Technology Learning Center (CTLC)**

In December of 2001, Clinton City Schools (CCS) opened a Community Technology Learning Center (CTLC). The center was opened with two purposes: 1) provide CCS’s students in grades K-12 with a *free, after-school program* that assists students with homework and technology; and 2) provide the entire community with access to technology. In the CTLC After-School Program, high school students work at the center as tutors. These tutors provide homework assistance, with a special emphasis on improvement in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics and technology skills. The tutors serve as positive role models for students they help. The CTLC also has a

community component in which free adult technology classes are offered to community members and local business and civic groups.

## ***Hickory, North Carolina***

### **Hickory Metro Higher Education Center**

A collaborative partnership among Appalachian State University (ASU), Catawba Valley Community College (CVCC), Lenoir Rhyne College, University of North Carolina -Charlotte, University of North Carolina -Chapel Hill, Western Carolina University, and WinstonSalem State University has a mission is to enhance the educational attainment of residents as well as the economic development of the Hickory region by offering a broad range of college and university degree programs identified and requested by local businesses and learners in the community. Its creation was a quick and direct response by Hickory area leaders to economic downturns of unprecedented dimensions in the early 2000s. HMHEC is the first higher education center to be established in North Carolina and more than 500 students now are enrolled. It has been cited by Governor Mike Easley as a model of educational innovation.

### **Exodus Homes**

A nine-year -old nonprofit agency that provides 76 beds of transitional to permanent supportive housing for homeless recovering addicts, alcoholics, and formerly incarcerated people who are returning to the community from treatment or prison. Exodus now owns and occupies two apartment complexes, one apartment building, and three houses, all previously public nuisance properties. Exodus also rents a duplex in partnership with a local church. Including the Exodus church and a warehouse, Exodus is located in five neighborhoods in Hickory. Exodus endeavors to rebuild the community as the lives of its residents are restored.

## **Project Potential**

*Project Potential* is a scholarship program designed to reach young people who, because of their circumstances, may not expect or envision a successful future either in high school or in higher education. Therefore, it is aimed at 8th grade students who show promise for higher achievement, but who are considered “at risk” of dropping out of high school. To remain in the program, students are required to maintain a 2.0 average and graduate from Hickory Public Schools. They must participate in service projects and monthly activities offered. They may not be involved in any criminal activity. Upon graduation, a \$2,500 scholarship is provided to assist students in continuing their education at a community college or other institution of higher education. The unique aspect of the program is that every student chosen is paired with a volunteer mentor from the community who encourages him or her through their four years of high school.